



# Vietnam Veterans Of America

## Chapter One

[www.vietnamvetschapter1.org](http://www.vietnamvetschapter1.org)

January 2018



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### MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING

JAN. 10, 2018

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place. Directors present included President Andy Megrath, Secretary Jack Crowther and Dick Doyle. No business was conducted.

The minutes of the November meeting were approved as printed in the newsletter.

President Andy Megrath presented the treasurer's report, which showed \$42,100 in the chapter's accounts.



The late John McLaughlin, who served as the Chapter 1 treasurer for several years, brought this Russian SKS rifle back from Vietnam. His son Chris recently presented it to Chapter 1 President Andy Megrath. The chapter has had it placed in the Plexiglas-covered box for display in the Chapter 1 offices. Photo - Andy Megrath.

Andy reported that the chapter had received from the possessions of our late treasurer, John McLaughlin, a Russian SKS rifle, which John had brought back from Vietnam. Andy arranged with Michaels, the art supply and craft store, to put it in a display case for viewing at the Chapter 1 offices.

Information on the SKS can be found online. It is a semi-automatic rifle, uses a 7.62 mm bullet, and was the predecessor of the better known Russian AK 47.

Andy noted it was used by the Viet Cong. Jack made a motion to approve the \$726.78 for the display case, which will also display John McLaughlin's dog-tag. Seconded by Jim Ficken. Approved unanimously. The price represented a steep discount from the original estimate.

Also reported were expenditures for \$660 for Vermont Crane Service for the installation of the new marble sculpture at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial and \$90 for a new American flag. A \$58 POW-MIA flag was donated by Green Mountain Awning Co.

Andy will present chapter certificates of appreciation to Giancola Construction, which owns the crane service; Don Ramey, who carved the new sculpture; Fabian Earth Moving, which transported the sculpture; and Kenny Heleba, who photographed the rededication of the memorial. Andy said Kenny took 450 still pictures, as well as a video.

Andy presented a payment request for \$450 for additional work on the chapter's new website, above and beyond the initial quote. The work included more graphic elements and training for Andy to enable him to edit the website. Laurie Musick Wright, the graphic artist who set up the website, added a new page, titled "Activism," and set up an email account. Emails sent to the website will be forwarded to Andy's email account. Taking photos of memorabilia, photo processing, and putting in some edits that were made were other tasks Laurie performed. (If other members go on the site, [www.vietnamvetschapter1.org](http://www.vietnamvetschapter1.org), and can identify anyone in the photos, they can notify Andy and he'll add the caption.)

Jack moved to pay LMW Design Inc. \$450 for the additional work. Seconded by Jim Ficken. Passed unanimously.

Andy reported that Frederick Wallis of Belgium, a life member of Chapter 1, had again made a \$100 donation to the chapter. He had checked out the new website and found it "very well done and easy to negotiate." He said he would be in Vermont this coming summer and hoped to visit the chapter.

Andy has attended three of the recent “town meetings” conducted by the VA. They were in White River Junction, Burlington, and Rutland. These are outreach efforts by the VA. Andy noted that the White River facility has an acting director, pending the permanent choice of a new director. The meeting in Rutland Jan. 8 was described as an effort by the VA to receive feedback by vets and allow vets to ask questions as a way to improve VA services.

Andy said the main thing that came out of the meeting in Rutland was the need for better communication. That people call and never have their calls returned was a complaint made, according to Andy. He said the VA intends to add staffing to deal with an overload of work.

Jim Ficken, a new member from Rutland Town, agreed to serve as a director, replacing Mike Divoll, who recently resigned. Jack Crowther nominated Jim to fill the vacancy. Seconded by Dick Doyle. Passed unanimously.

In other business, Andy noted that the chapter had provided \$480 in assistance to pay for heating oil and wood pellets for a chapter member who had asked for assistance. Andy had called directors for approval of the assistance.

Jack Crowther won the \$50 drawing among those who attended.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jack Crowther, secretary,

**THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14,  
AT 6 P.M. AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.  
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**

VVA Chapter 1  
15 Wales St. Rutland, VT 05701

**Address Service Requested**



# **Vietnam Veterans Of America**

## **Chapter One**

**[www.vietnamvetschapter1.org](http://www.vietnamvetschapter1.org)**

**March 2018**



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### **MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING**

**March 20, 2018**

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place. Directors present included President Andy Megrath, Treasurer Richard Reed, and Secretary Jack Crowther. No business was conducted.

The minutes of the January meeting were approved as printed in the newsletter.

We heard a thorough presentation by Sgt. Thomas Conrad and Investigator Michael Davidson of the Vermont Department of Liquor Control regarding our chief source of income, namely "rip tickets" sold by Tomasi's bar in Fair Haven.

The arrangement with the bar has been vital to the financial health of Chapter 1 for many years, but there has been some question as to whether we in Chapter 1 were following the accounting and oversight procedures required by the state. While our review of procedures is under way, Andy Megrath has instructed Tomasi's to stop selling the tickets.

In the course of their presentation, Conrad and Davidson outlined their duties and objectives with respect to the rip-off tickets. They described the tickets as an excellent source of revenues for non-profit organizations like Chapter 1, but stressed that the benefitting groups need to follow proper accounting rules. Essentially, the charity needs to be able to account for all the tickets purchased from the distributor, in our case, Bingo Supply of Bondville. We also need to keep track of the money taken in, the prize money awarded and any tickets that are left unsold. It was evident that we, Chapter 1 have not been sufficiently on top of that process, though the relationship with Tomasi's has continued smoothly for years.

"To run it properly, there's a lot of time and work . . ." Conrad noted, explaining that the purpose of the state Liquor Control Department's oversight was to see that the benefitting charities get the money they're entitled to. "If it's run correctly, it's a great source of income," Conrad noted.

After asking Andy a few questions about the chapter's non-profit status and tax-filing, Davidson affirmed that the chapter was legally entitled to receive the rip ticket money. But he also noted, "You need to account for your money," meaning that income, payouts and unsold tickets must be reconciled. The whole procedure is subject to audit by the state Tax Department.

In the future, Chapter 1 needs in its records an invoice for every box of rip tickets the bar receives. "If you're going to do it, you have to have control of it because it's yours," Davidson said.

Andy Megrath and Treasurer Richard Reed plan to visit Tomasi's to review procedures to bring things into compliance. As mentioned, Andy has instructed the bar owners not to sell tickets for the time being.

In other business, Tim Lonergan, a chapter life member, made a presentation on behalf of Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports, which provides year-round recreation opportunities for people with disabilities. The disabilities cover a wide range, including blindness, missing limbs, PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder), and autism. Veterans with

disabilities are very much a part of the program, and have taken part in such activities as an ice climbing outing in Warren and a women's veterans ski and snowboarding day at Pico, scheduled for the coming weekend.

Loneragan described his own experience working with a blind veteran. Veterans in general, not just Vietnam vets are the focus of the veterans programs. A specific example was a group from the We Soldier On homeless vets program in Massachusetts, which came up and spent the day at Chittenden Reservoir on the water and hiking. "It gives these folks a chance to get out and be active and do things they might have thought they never would do," Tim said.

"This organization has always been cognizant of veterans and tried to find activities for them," he noted. A grant awarded four years ago caused the group to become more involved with the VA facility in White River Junction, he explained, but this year that grant has gone away. To keep the vets program going will require raising \$75,000, the reason for his appearance at our meeting.

Andy Megrath suggested that Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports approach the Vermont Veterans Fund with a request for funding. The fund is a tax-supported item on the Vermont State tax return and doles out grants based on the contributions received. Andy is a member of the Governor's Veterans Advisory Council and sits on the committee that awards the money.

Jack Crowther asked if there was a way of earmarking a donation for a veterans program, and Tim said yes. Both Jack and Andy Megrath both registered some frustration in efforts to communicate with VASS in the past. Tim noted that the organization has 10 paid employees and over 400 volunteers. He offered to serve as a liaison with the group.

Jack further asked if VASS was able to insure that all or a certain percentage of any gift from Chapter 1 would go for direct services to veterans, as opposed to administrative or other general expenses of the group. Tim agreed to get answers.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported balances in the chapter's bank accounts in January of \$44,217 and in February of 48,444. The report was approved unanimously.

Andy reported on the recent activities of the Vermont Governor's Veterans Advisory Council, sometimes called GVAC. Andy outlined seven priorities identified by the council that were forwarded to Gov. Phil Scott, who has supported four. The seven were: 1. Phase out the income tax on military pensions, 2. Support entitlement scholarships for the National Guard, 3. Sustained/appropriate funding for the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington, 4. Increased licensing reciprocity for veterans and spouses in high-demand job fields, 5. Making the Adjutant General's position appointed by the governor, with a revamping of the qualifications, 6. Eliminating the inclusion of VA pensions and compensation in household income on the Vermont State tax return, and 7. Creating a low-interest pool of capital for veterans looking to start a business.

Number 4 refers to allowing soldiers and spouses with professional certifications obtained during military service to be certified in Vermont automatically.

Andy reported that Gov. Scott was standing behind priorities 1, 2, 4, and 5.

Andy also reported some data associated with military retirees, including the following: As of September, 2016, there were 646 non-disabled officers age 65 and over receiving \$1,818,000 per year from the Department of Defense. Non-disabled, retired enlisted residents totaled 1,527, and were being paid by the Department of Defense \$1,872,000 per year. Andy's point was that when issues like the priorities listed come before the Legislature, the first question always asked is, "How much is it going to cost us?" Thus compiling the statistics is a way of showing the economic impact of veterans living in the state.

Another figure from the same sheet of statistics calculated that the total amount of dollars retirees and their survivors contributed to Vermont was \$85,416,000 a year.

"And the worst part of it is the state can't come back and tell us how many veterans there are in the state of Vermont," Andy said. Richard Reed, who formerly headed the state Office of Veterans Affairs, noted, "For what it's worth, nobody has an exact number anywhere. . . I chased that slippery eel."

Jack Crowther, the chair of the nominating committee, nominated the existing slate of officers and directors to be re-elected. They include: president, Andy Megrath; vice president, Dave Mathis; treasurer, Richard Reed; secretary, Jack Crowther; and directors, Joanne Reynolds, Dick Doyle, William Whitney, Jim Ficken and George Henry.

Anyone else interested in one of the above positions should contact an officer or director or attend the annual meeting April 11 and express his or her interest.

Richard Reed reported on an email he received from Tom Jackson, who is a VVA service officer. The national VVA has informed Jackson he is not eligible to be a service officer because he is an associate member, rather than a regular member of VVA. Though a Navy veteran, Jackson's service occurred after the Vietnam era, so he isn't eligible to be a regular VVA member. It was noted that in the past, associate VVA members have served as service officers for VVA. No formal action was taken on this matter.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jack Crowther, secretary,

**THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11,  
AT 6 P.M. AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.  
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**



# Vietnam Veterans Of America *Chapter One*

[www.vietnamvetschapter1.org](http://www.vietnamvetschapter1.org)

**APRIL 2018**



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## MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING

April 11, 2018

**SPECIAL NOTE:** To reduce the costs of returned mail and to insure accurate delivery of the newsletter, members who have a change of email or regular mail address should notify the chapter through the website listed above. A "Contact Us" button is prominently displayed at the top of the home page. The new address will be relayed to President Andy Megrath.

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place. Directors present included President Andy Megrath, Treasurer Richard Reed, Secretary Jack Crowther, and Director Jim Ficken. No business was conducted.

The Annual Meeting of Chapter 1 began with President Andy Megrath turning the chair over to Jack Crowther, chair of the nominating committee. Andy informed us that Director Joanne Reynolds had resigned. In an email, Joanne expressed her regret in being unable to serve due to the lingering effects of Lyme disease, which makes evening driving difficult and risky.

"I so appreciate all my brothers, and thank you all," Joanne concluded. Chapter 1 is thankful for Joanne's service and hopes that a good recovery will allow her to take part in chapter affairs somewhere down the road.

Jack Crowther noted that the existing slate of officers, with the exception of Joanne Reynolds, had been put forward for re-election. With one vacancy on the board, we turned to Jon Pintello, who was present at the meeting. Jon is one of the chapter's very early members and served as treasurer for a number of years. Andy Megrath nominated Jon to be included in the slate of officers. No other names were offered. Jack then proposed the following officers and directors to be elected: president, Andy Megrath; vice president, Dave Mathis; treasurer, Richard Reed; secretary, Jack Crowther; and directors, Dick Doyle, Jim Ficken, George Henry, Jon Pintello, and Bill Whitney. Richard Reed seconded the motion. Motion carried without opposition.

The minutes of the March meeting were approved as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported \$53,700 in our combined bank accounts. The report was accepted unanimously.

We returned to the topic of "rip tickets," which occupied much of the last meeting. As readers may recall, the tickets, sold at Tomasi's bar in Fair Haven, has been by far the main source of Chapter 1 income for many years and has enabled the chapter to support a number of charitable organizations and causes. However, as explained by two investigators for the state Department of Liquor Control, our accounting practices for the ticket sales have not met state requirements. As a result, we suspended the sale of tickets until we could bring the accounting up to standard.

In further discussion, we agreed that the bar should be allowed to, at its discretion, stop sales of tickets from a particular box of tickets when the major winners have been chosen. This makes the game more attractive but increases the accounting chores. Ultimately we decided on the following:

1. Chapter 1 will buy associate memberships for any bartender at Tomasi's selling rip tickets. This fulfills the requirement that a Chapter 1 member be in charge of the sales. Sean and Danielle Tomasi, owners of the bar, are currently members.
2. Any unused tickets from a given box will be returned to Chapter 1 for storage for approximately three years.
3. Invoices for the boxes of tickets purchased, the record of payouts, and the unsold tickets saved at our offices will constitute the records necessary for us to be in compliance. According to Andy, Danielle Tomasi is already doing the necessary bookkeeping. When the last winning ticket is sold and the bartender "closes the box," that is, stops selling tickets from that particular box, the remaining unsold tickets and the cash register tape showing all the tickets sold and the payouts for the winning tickets will be given to Chapter 1 for storage and safekeeping. We learned that a the rip tickets have their own cash register.



4. Our treasurer, Richard Reed, will in the future write the checks for purchase of the boxes of rip tickets, supplied by Bingo Supply in Bondville.

5. Chapter 1 is ultimately responsible to the state Tax Department to insure the accounting is done properly.

Jack Crowther moved to have Chapter 1 purchase memberships for any Tomasi's bartenders selling rip tickets. Seconded by Jim Ficken. Passed unanimously.

Andy Megrath reported on communication with Chapter 1 member Tim Lonergan, who made a pitch at the March meeting for a Chapter 1 contribution to Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports. The group, with whom Tim volunteers, provides year-round recreational activities to people with disabilities. At the March meeting, we expressed concern that any contribution be earmarked specifically for veterans. We further inquired about the portion of a donation that would go for administrative costs, as opposed to direct services to veterans.

In response, Tim responded to Andy. "All of the money that we give to Adaptive (Ski and) Sports, as long as its earmarked for veterans, that's the only place that it goes," Andy reported. Tim has been named as a go-between for the charity and Chapter 1.

Jack Crowther moved that the chapter earmark \$500 to \$1,000, which can be released to Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports, on approval of a specific use for veterans by the president of Chapter 1 and one other officer. Seconded by Richard Reed. Passed unanimously.

Andy Megrath reported 141 regular members, 124 of them being life members. There are five associate members.

Andy circulated a copy of a proclamation signed by Gov. Phil Scott proclaiming March 29 of this year as Vietnam War Veterans Day. Andy will have framed an official copy of the proclamation, with a gold seal. The proclamation noted that nearly 23,000 Vermonters served in Vietnam and 100 were killed in action. The proclamation notes the state's responsibility "to help our Vietnam veterans and their families and provide them with the support they need to maintain a sustainable state of well-being." The proclamation also notes the state's obligation to consider and be grateful for the service of veterans of other wars and for the men and women currently serving in the military.

Andy read a note from Fred Wallis, a life member living in Belgium. Fred sent a \$100 contribution and complimented the chapter on its new website.

The next State Council meeting will be June 23 at the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington. This will be the annual cookout, at which VVA members from around the state help prepare the food for the residents. Those wishing to take part should plan to be at the Veterans Home at 10:30 a.m. There may be carpooling opportunities. Check with an officer or member from your area.

Andy announced that the acting director of the VA Medical Center in White River Junction, Matthew Mulcahey, will be conducting "town meetings" on May 7 at 1 p.m. at VFW Post 782 at 176 South Winooski Ave. in Burlington; on May 8 at 5 p.m. at the Lebanon, N.H., American Legion Post 22, which is at 189 Mechanic St.; and on June 4 at 10 a.m. in Brattleboro at VFW Post 1034, 40 Black Mountain Rd. Andy has attended two of these, which he said are an effort to gather input from veterans on the services the VA provides. "And believe me, he got an earful," Andy noted of the sessions he attended.

Andy said the acting director makes a presentation and then has a question and answer session with the veterans who show up.



**The VVA 40th Anniversary challenge coin measures 1 3/4 inches across. Members of Chapter 1 are entitled to receive a coin free upon request, with additional coins costing**

Andy displayed a VVA challenge coin, commemorating the founding of VVA in 1978. (Chapter 1 was chartered in 1980 as the first chapter in the nation.) The chapter purchased 50 of the coins, anticipating a demand from chapter members. After brief discussion, we decided to give the coins for free to all chapter members who request one. Simply notify Andy Megrath at [vthogman@comcast.net](mailto:vthogman@comcast.net) or by mail at VVA Chapter 1, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701. Be sure to give your mailing address. If you'd like more than one coin, send \$5 per additional coin.

The coins will be sent out first-come, first-served as long as they last. If we go through the entire 50 coins, we'll try to order more, though availability is uncertain.

Richard Reed won the \$50 drawing among those who attended.

Andy Megrath offered those present marble chips from the new and recently installed marble carving from the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. We had intended them to be available on Veterans Day at the dedication of the new sculpture, but forgot to have them on hand. We now have a bucket of chips available. Contact us through the website or in person if you'd like a chip.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jack Crowther, secretary,

**THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13,  
AT 6 P.M. AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.  
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**





# Vietnam Veterans Of America

## Chapter One

[www.vietnamvetschapter1.org](http://www.vietnamvetschapter1.org)

**JUNE 2018**



### MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING

June 13, 2018

**SPECIAL NOTE:** To reduce the costs of returned mail and to insure accurate delivery of the newsletter, members who have a change of email or regular mail address should notify the chapter through the website listed above. A "Contact Us" button is prominently displayed at the top of the home page. The new address will be relayed to President Andy Megrath.

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place. Directors present included President Andy Megrath, Vice President Dave Mathis, Treasurer Richard Reed, Secretary Jack Crowther, and Director Jim Ficken. No business was conducted.

Present beside the officers listed above were member Tom Siefring, a summer resident of Killington; Mary Megrath; and Sue Crowther.



Andy Megrath displays the small marble sculpture, mounted on a wooden block, honoring him for his 14 years of service as president of Chapter 1, as well as his many other efforts on behalf of veterans. Present for the ceremony was his wife, Mary.

The meeting began with a presentation to Andy Megrath of a small marble sculpture of a soldier, mounted on a wooden block, with a plaque stating: "Presented to Andy Megrath, president of Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America, on June 13, 2018, in recognition of his many years of service to the chapter and to Vermont veterans." Jack Crowther made the presentation, citing Andy's Chapter 1 service as president and treasurer, his work on the VVA State Council, the Governor's Veterans Advisory Council, and the board of Rutland's Dodge House for homeless veterans. As a dedicated Harley-Davidson motorcyclist, Andy frequently takes part in rallies and escorts connected to veteran events. He has also shared his Vietnam experience with school children and other interested groups. Jack noted all officers and board members of Chapter 1 shared in supporting the tribute.

The minutes of the April meeting were approved as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported a total of \$54,954.98 in the chapter's accounts. In line with discussions at recent meetings, Richard reported he is now tracking the expenditures and revenues associated with sale of "rip tickets" at Tomasi's bar in Fair Haven. The tickets are the main source of chapter revenue. Richard noted the chapter recently spent \$832 for two boxes of tickets. He also reported \$1,336 in net income from tickets. Richard said he wanted to "get a handle on what the actual return is for us."

President Andy Megrath noted that Tomasi's only sells the tickets until all of the \$100 tickets have been sold. The tickets are now being returned to the chapter for storage in case of an audit by the state. The bar owners, Shaun and Danielle Tomasi, and four bartenders are now all associate members of the chapter (with dues paid by the chapter) in accordance with state requirements. Richard's report was approved unanimously.

Andy reported that the "challenge coin" offered to all members for free costs \$3.50 to mail out, the cost being born by the chapter. From our initial order of 50 coins, Andy estimated 15-18 coins were left. Members wanting a coin can notify Andy at [vthogman@comcast.net](mailto:vthogman@comcast.net) or by mail at VVA Chapter 1, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701. Be sure to give your mailing address. If you'd like more than one coin, send \$5 per additional coin.

Andy reported the chapter has nine associate members and 139 regular members, including 124 life members.

Two additional names have been submitted for inclusion on the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Honor Roll. New names were recently added in November.

The VVA State Council meeting and Vermont Veterans Home picnic was to take place on Saturday, June 16, at the home in Bennington. Andy has again agreed to serve as vice president of the State Council. Anticipating those duties will involve some travel to Washington for national Board of Directors meetings, Jack Crowther made a motion to cover Andy's travel, hotel and meal expenses. Seconded by Richard Reed. Passed unanimously. Andy had suggested the action because of the limited treasury of the State Council to cover such expenses.

Jack Crowther reported on the ground cover around the marble carving at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. He noted that recently the city had removed the wooly thyme that was planted and mulched the oval surrounding the central marble sculpture. Jack, who has maintained the wooly thyme ground cover in recent years, said the plant had been a challenge to maintain. Now that it has been removed, he recommended a switch to a plant called sedum and offered two samples. A look at the two types resulted in a decision to opt for a variety called Dragon's Blood sedum.

Richard Reed made a motion to approve the purchase and planting of the chosen variety of sedum. Seconded by Tom Sieftring. Approved unanimously.

Jack will order a number of the plants. Several members offered to help plant the sedum. (The day after the chapter meeting, Jack stopped in at the Rutland Recreation Department maintenance office, which maintains city parks. A employee there said he thought the department would be able to remove the mulch around the sculpture and put down some topsoil in preparation for planting the sedum.

Andy reported that he planned to take part the next day in a Patriot Guard Riders motorcycle procession to the West Street Cemetery for replacement of a gravestone for a Revolutionary War soldier. The gravestone had been missing for decades.

Jim Ficken noted that the Vermont Veterans Home is raising money to install a handicapped-usable walkway. Donors will be able to purchase an inscribed brick for the walkway. The fundraiser will probably come up at the weekend's picnic and State Council meeting.

Richard Reed noted he will be conducting a fundraiser for a memorial walkway at the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph, noting the walkway will cost about \$200,000. He plans to use Go Fund Me, an online fundraising application, as well as seek support from other sources.

Jack Crowther won the \$50 drawing among those who attended.

Andy Megrath again noted the availability of marble chips from the new and recently installed marble carving from the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. A bucket of chips is available in our office. Come to a meeting or contact us through the website if you'd like a chip from the sculpture.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jack Crowther, secretary,

**THE CHAPTER WILL NOT MEET IN JULY AND AUGUST. THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE  
WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 12, AT 6 P.M. AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.  
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**



# Vietnam Veterans Of America

## Chapter One

[www.vietnamvetschapter1.org](http://www.vietnamvetschapter1.org)

**SEPTEMBER 2018**



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### MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING

SEPTEMBER 12, 2018

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place. Directors present included President Andy Megrath, Vice President Dave Mathis, Treasurer Richard Reed, Secretary Jack Crowther, and directors Dick Doyle, Jim Ficken and Bill Whitney. No Board of Directors business was conducted.

The minutes of the June meeting were approved as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported a total of \$65,114.88 in the chapter's accounts. The report was approved unanimously.

Jack Crowther has not heard anything lately on the plan to remove the head and shoulders of the old Vietnam Veterans Memorial sculpture. The plan is to save that portion of it as a Chapter 1 historical memento. The sculpture was replaced on Memorial Day by a similar sculpture carved out of a better quality piece of marble. Cutting down the old sculpture to a piece weighing a manageable 150 pounds or so is expected to cost about \$500. The remainder of the sculpture will be discarded.

Andy Megrath will be going to Washington, D.C., for a meeting of the national VVA Board of Directors from Oct. 17 - 21. As vice president of the Vermont VVA State Council, Andy will attend with State Council President Perry Melvin, and they will be part of a meeting of state council presidents. Andy asked if the chapter would pay for a hotel room in Burlington that he has booked so he can catch the early-morning flight. Jim Ficken moved that the chapter pay the \$230.41 bill. Seconded by Dick Doyle. Approved unanimously.

Richard Reed, as treasurer, is now tracking sales of ripoff tickets at Tomasi's bar in Fair Haven, our main source of income. He reported June sales of \$3,770 and July sales of \$4,430, with \$1,644 paid for the tickets. That produced \$6,556 in net revenue for the two months. Richard brought to the office two boxes of unsold tickets for storage. Tomasi's practice, which some bars observe and others do not, is to stop selling tickets from a given box once the major payout tickets have been cashed in. This makes the game more attractive to purchasers, since the remaining losing and low-payout tickets are retired.

Richard undertook the bookkeeping and management of the tickets in response to state liquor control officers who spoke to the chapter and informed us we needed greater accountability for tickets sold and unsold. This involves a commitment of time by Richard and travel to Fair Haven. Consequently, Richard submitted a mileage expense claim of \$160.80, based on 50 cents a mile. Jim Ficken moved it be approved. Seconded by Bill Whitney. Approved unanimously.

Jack Crowther thanked Dave Mathis for watering the new plantings at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The chapter will present a certificate of appreciation to Isaiah Webb of Brandon, a landscaper and son of a Vietnam vet. Isaiah assisted Jack in putting in some new plantings at the memorial.

Andy Megrath asked whether, considering the healthy state of the chapter's bank accounts, we should make a further contribution to the trust fund we established for future care of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial once Chapter 1 ceases to exist. Long-term care of the memorial was a prominent issue over the last couple of years. Discussion culminated in

the establishment of a trust fund with the city treasurer's office to provide the care of the memorial that might be needed. (The City of Rutland owns the memorial, although Chapter 1 has been responsible for care and upkeep, with help from the Rutland Garden Club and the city Recreation and Parks Department). Chapter 1 made an initial contribution of \$10,000 to get the trust started.

Richard Reed then proposed that with its considerable income, the chapter consider where it might spend its money. Dave Mathis offered the suggestion of a scholarship, which the chapter has provided a couple of times in the past. Richard said that if the chapter folded, the money would go to the national organization, whose future at that point might also be limited. He said he'd rather see the money used locally. Andy Megrath mentioned local organizations we've supported in the past, including the Boys and Girls Club of Rutland County and the Dodge House for Homeless Veterans. A new generation of veterans offers other possibilities for assistance.

Bringing the "Traveling Wall," a facsimile of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., to Rutland, as was done some years ago, was mentioned. Bringing the Traveling Wall back has been discussed in recent years but rejected as too big an undertaking. In particular, the 24-hour security required is particularly burdensome, along with costs for transporting the wall and putting up the staff that accompanies it.

Jack Crowther had two suggestions for Chapter 1 expenditures: 1) Approach the Rutland Historical Society with a request to create space for a Chapter 1 archive of materials, offering to contribute money to make that possible; and 2) Offering to support a concert at the Paramount Theatre like "Groovin' — the Summers of Love Experience," held last June. The program featured a group of singers and instrumentalists recreating the songs from the Vietnam era. Proceeds benefitted the Veterans Miracle Center, a charity serving needs of veterans in the northeastern U.S. Jack will follow up with the historical society and the Paramount Theatre.

Jim Ficken, who teaches at Vermont Technical College and substitutes at the Stafford Technical Center plumbing program, suggested financial help for grandchildren of Vietnam veterans or others with a veteran connection. He's especially interested in technical education. He felt that chapter money should be used for "something meaningful," and said he would put some specific suggestions together.

Andy Megrath announced that there will be a Veterans Town Hall in Rutland on Nov. 4 at 1 p.m. at American Legion Post 31 in Rutland. The event is described as "a community forum aiming to establish a greater understanding between local veterans and the friends and neighbors they fought for." More information can be found at [www.vtvetstownhall.eventbrite.com](http://www.vtvetstownhall.eventbrite.com). This website is an events listing, so look for **Rutland Veterans Town Hall 2018** with a picture of the Legion. There is button to press if you want to register.

Andy described his participation in a similar event in Burlington at which five or six veterans described their experiences, including sexual trauma experienced by female veterans.

Rutland's Chapter 1 offices are now the regular site for meetings of the VVA State Council because of Rutland's central location.

Among his many hats, Andy is a member of the committee that awards grants from the Vermont Veterans Fund, which receives money from voluntary donations on the Vermont state tax return. Among the recipients were the COTS program for the homeless in Burlington and Rutland's Dodge House for homeless veterans.

Andy had attended the Governor's Veterans Advisory Committee the day before in Montpelier. GVAC presents to the governor its legislative priorities, which the governor reviews and then endorses or not. "We can't say anything (about the latest recommendations) until he (Gov. Phil Scott) comes back and tells us," Andy said. He noted that Scott supported four of seven of the items put forward last year, including educational benefits for National Guard members and licensure for veterans seeking to transfer credentials from military to civilian jobs.

Andy noted that he had attended the interment ceremony for our former treasurer, John McLaughlin, at the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph in August. John's ashes have been placed in the columbarium at the cemetery. A brass plaque will be added later. A display of tall flags from the Patriot Guard Riders was present. Andy carried John's ashes in and out of the chapel.

Richard Reed reported on a financial matter regarding the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph. At our June meeting Richard had reported his plan to conduct a Go Fund Me online fundraising campaign to raise \$200,000 to build a memorial walkway at the cemetery. Now, however, alternative funding may be used. Richard's non-profit fundraising structure is still in place and could be used if needed. Richard sits on the cemetery's Advisory Board.

Dave Mathis won the \$50 among those who attended.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jack Crowther, secretary

**THE CHAPTER WILL NOT MEET IN OCTOBER. THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE WEDNESDAY, NOV. 14, AT 6 P.M. AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND. A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**



# Vietnam Veterans Of America *Chapter One*

[www.vietnamvetschapter1.org](http://www.vietnamvetschapter1.org)

**NOVEMBER 2018**



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## MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING

NOVEMBER 14, 2018

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place. Directors present included President Andy Megrath, Treasurer Richard Reed, Secretary Jack Crowther, and directors Dick Doyle, and Jim Ficken. No Board of Directors business was conducted.

Bill Ellwood and Tim Lonergan also attended.

The minutes of the September meeting were approved as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported a total of \$79,042.78 in the chapter's accounts. He noted that sales of break-open tickets had brought in \$31,947 for the fiscal year beginning March 1, with a cost for the tickets of \$4,160, leaving a net income of \$27,787. The report was approved unanimously.

Jim Davidson, curator for the Rutland Historical Society, appeared at the invitation of the chapter to talk about what role the society might play in helping Chapter 1 preserve its records and memorabilia when the chapter no longer exists. While the chapter is going strong now, we don't know how long that will last.

Jim made several points:

1. The society has limited space at its building on Nickwackett Street to house physical items.
2. The society is able to scan documents and photographs and archive them for free at archive.org, as well as make them available on the historical society website. This makes them available to the general public. If the items are of printed material, they are then searchable by key words, a great help to anyone looking for people or specific topics.
3. The society currently has space for storage of physical items at the BROCC building on Union Street. This would allow room for some items that are worth preserving as originals, even if they might also be scanned into a computer.

Chapter 1 has several walls full of awards, citations and pictures, including our 1980 charter as the first VVA chapter in the country. A captured Russian rifle, issues of the VVA Veteran, videos, parade uniforms, statuettes and event programs are among other items we have saved. There are also file cabinets of treasurer's and secretary's reports, news clippings, membership lists and other printed materials that would be candidates for scanning.

Jim Davidson specifically mentioned the membership rosters as valuable historical documents that could be scanned. Handwritten items can be scanned, of course, but for a "searchable" document they need to be typed or typeset. Jim noted that when framed items are acquired by the society, they typically remove the frames for more compact storage.

The upshot of considerable back-and-forth among the members and Jim was that Jim will speak to his board at a meeting to present the matter of preserving Chapter 1 materials by the society. The effort will involve participation by Chapter 1 members. Andy Megrath, Dick Doyle, Bill Ellwood, Jim Ficken and Jack Crowther were among those volunteering to help with the project. Jim will be in touch with Jack to discuss further efforts.

Moving on the other business, Tim Lonergan, a chapter life member, returned for further discussion of how the chapter might support Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports, a non-profit group that helps individuals with disabilities enjoy skiing and other sports. At our April meeting the chapter had adopted a motion to earmark \$500 to \$1,000 for the organization pending proposal of a specific activity for veterans. In following up, Tim expressed concern about notification of vets of upcoming events for which they might be eligible, given the irregular schedule of the Chapter 1 newsletter. He also noted that a retired Army staff sergeant is heading up the veterans program for VASS, but he is located in the Sugarbush Resort area. That means vet programs have tended to be in that area. Tim said he had spoken to two people involved in the program and they hoped to focus more on our part of the state.

He invited the chapter to submit ideas for activities for veterans that VASS could sponsor, noting that some of them include mountain biking, cycling, rock climbing, skiing, snowboarding, hiking, canoeing. But he also mentioned somewhat tamer activities like fly-tying and snowshoeing. Tim suggested some of our more active members might want to be involved in instructing some activities.

Tim noted that while the term “adaptive” suggests some limitation, veterans may have a disability such as PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) that is not visible. He noted that there is no charge to veterans who take part in VASS activities.

Andy Megrath asked directly: If the chapter donated money, would it be used locally or “go up north.” Tim said he would find out the answer to that.

Jack Crowther asked if the chapter wanted to approve a specific donation right away, contingent of VASS coming up-with an appropriate activity based in this area. In line with a suggestion by Tim, members are invited to contact Andy Megrath or another officer or board member with suggestions for a VASS activity for veterans in this area. Richard Reed then said he’d like to “flip it” and have VASS come back to the chapter with a suggested activity and a cost figure. “If it’s way out of our league, we’ll tell you,” he said to Tim.

Richard then moved that Tim come back to the chapter with an activity in Rutland County and a dollar figure that the chapter can fund or assist in funding, to be discussed and acted on. Seconded by Dick Doyle. Passed unanimously.

Andy reported that the chapter now has 135 members. At a meeting Andy attended in the Washington, D.C., area in October, the national Board of Directors voted to establish a single level of membership, \$50 for a lifetime membership. This is a change from annual dues for one to three years and a lifetime rate that was offered at \$100 for everyone during a recent promotion. Andy noted that the chapter had just 15 members that were enrolled for one to three years and noted we could convert all those to life membership for \$750. Andy was also thinking that some whose membership had lapsed might be encouraged to rejoin based on the low lifetime rate.

Jack Crowther made a motion for the chapter to upgrade anyone with a one- to three-year membership to lifetime. The member should notify Andy Megrath at [vthogman AT gmail.com](mailto:vthogman AT gmail.com) by the end of February. It is a quirk of VVA membership history that not every current member has a DD 214 form on file with national, although that is a requirement for membership. To upgrade to a life membership, you must have the form on file. Andy has a chapter roster noting those who have a DD 214 on file, so he will notify you if you need to submit the form with your upgrade request. This is a one-time offer from Chapter 1. Motion seconded by Richard Reed. Passed unanimously.

Andy Megrath noted that national VVA has a Facebook page and is encouraging people to “like” the page as a way of getting more followers. On another matter, Andy mentioned a clip from the TV show, “This Is Us,” featuring a Vietnam vet in a telling portrayal. He also has a clip from Rolling Thunder (the Washington motorcycle ride-in) last Memorial Day in which Andy was interviewed for television. The segment was aired. Andy will see about getting them on the website.



Andy has approached Gov. Scott's office, so far without response, on getting support for a Vermont-oriented book about the Vietnam War. The books are offered to states and include sections specific to a particular state, followed by text and pictures covering the war generally. There is a resolution in front of the Utah Legislature supporting the purchase and distribution of the books. Andy said that with the governor's support, he could approach a legislator to move the project forward.

Dick Doyle brought to our attention a group called Home at Last, a non-profit based in Brattleboro that assists homeless veterans. The group buys inexpensive homes in established parks and rehabilitates them as necessary. They are furnished and equipped with necessities. "The homeless veterans themselves pay 30 percent of their income to stay in the housing. They also are linked up with case managers at the VA." The effort is funded by the VA and private donations.

From the Home at Last website: "This small program succeeds because we offer a real home and community as way to regain dignity and a new, productive and stable life. We do not have an overhead operating budget; all administration of our program is by our highly committed and qualified volunteer Board of Directors, many of whom are veterans. All the undesignated donations and funding we receive goes directly to programming and helping homeless vets." Dick will get more information on the group, which Chapter 1 may wish to support. The group operates in Vermont and New Hampshire.

Richard Reed will be getting refresher training as a veterans service officer.

Richard noted that the Memorial Walkway is going to proceed at the Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Randolph. "The money is there to build it," he said. "We've already got a plan, and I would like to suggest people think about, would we like to have a Vietnam Veterans of America monument on that walkway?" Richard noted the VVA motto of "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another." He suggested the monument could symbolize that phrase, noting that it will be "a lasting legacy for us when we're all gone." The walkway will include places with room for monuments along it.

Jack Crowther said he had talked to Eric Mallette, program director of the Paramount Theatre about Chapter 1 sponsoring a concert by a U.S. military band. Eric was enthusiastic about such a project, seeing it as having broad appeal. The military offers a variety of musical groups, such as jazz and bluegrass, along with the more traditional patriotic parade music. The bands perform for free. Tickets are free, but reservations are required. The Paramount would ask \$1,500 from Chapter 1 to cover its overhead, but as sponsor the chapter would have the opportunity to present itself to the community and have a display table of materials for the public.

In response to an email from Jack Crowther about the concert idea, director George Henry wrote from Florida that while he liked the idea of the concert, he thought the chapter should use the opportunity to introduce "other veteran advocacy groups" to the audience, such as those dealing with homelessness, PTSD, and other issues. He felt the chapter should not simply be "tooting our own horn." He added, "Possibly it could be timed with a special military calendar event."

Dick Doyle moved that Chapter 1 commit up to \$1,500 to sponsor a military musical group at the Paramount. Seconded by Richard Reed. Passed unanimously.

Tim Lonergan noted discussion from the last meeting about the Chapter possibly sponsoring a scholarship for grandchildren of vets. Jim Ficken noted that he is currently working on the idea. Presumably the children of veterans could also be eligible.

Bill Ellwood asked who answers inquiries sent to the chapter via the website. Andy Megrath, our president and webmaster, handles that chore. In reviewing the website, Bill noted there were not a lot of pictures of members on it. He suggested that we might wish to include more of them, for example, pictures of members during their time in Vietnam and how they look today. After some discussion, Bill volunteered to be a collection point for photos that could be passed on to Andy for inclusion on the website.

Anyone interested in submitting “then and now” photos (from one’s time in the service and today or recently) can send them to Bill Ellwood at wellwood1950 AT gmail.com. (The AT should be replaced by the @ symbol.) The JPEG format is the easiest to use in sending pictures, so try to use that.

Andy Megrath said that our office in Rutland seems to be popular as the site for VVA State Council meetings because of its central location.

Jack Crowther won the \$50 raffle among those who attended.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jack Crowther, secretary

**THE CHAPTER WILL NOT MEET IN DECEMBER. THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE  
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 9, AT 6 P.M. AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.  
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**